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ASEAN-US Economic Relations, by Kintanar and Loong-Hee

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ASEAN-U.S. ECONOMIC RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW. Edited by Agustin Kintanar, Jr. and Tan Loong-Hoe. Pasir Panjang, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986. x, 54 pages.

The articles which constitute this economic overview are the summaries of eight papers commissioned by and presented at a (April 1985) workshop of the ASEAN Economic Research Unit. The current volume is the first of three planned in a project designed as a three-year undertaking, with each year focusing on a distinct but related aspect of the economic links between ASEAN and the U.S.

The present publication deals with patterns of trade between the U.S. and ASEAN, with consistent reference to Japan's comparative role; U.S. investment in ASEAN; transfer of technology by U.S. transnational corporations and contractual arrangements; ASEAN exports and imports to and from the U.S.; and the impact of U.S. policy mix on ASEAN economies.

Contributors were: Dean A. DeRosa; Mari Pangestu; Mingsarn Santikarn Kaosa-ard; Wing Thyee Woo; Charles W. Lindsey; Majorie Suriyamongkol; Chia Siow Yue; and Eric Rasmussen.

I do not propose to offer a critique of each paper; suffice it to say that the book may be read as a whole, or each paper individually. The introductory first paper by the editors gives a brief history of U.S.-ASEAN trade relations in the last twenty-five years. The other papers give only sketchy or statistical, and often tentative, interpretations of these current relations; strong arguments and theories are noticeably absent. Perhaps the exceptions to this style are the papers by Kaosa-ard (pp. 23-26) and Lindsey (pp. 33-37) on contractual arrangements and technological transfer.

Of course a full elaboration of such trade relations was not the intention of this initial thin publication. Rather, the purpose was to give an overview of the latest economic patterns, and in so doing the book allows for a quick perusal of factors in which one may be interested, and thereby provides a starting point for further considerations.

Two last points should be made. Firstly, the very nature of the subject-matter makes the book heavily economically oriented. And secondly, the subject of trade relations between the U.S., as a superpower, and least developed countries, is treated objectively and fairly, despite possible moral and/or political implications, with the recognition that trade relations are reciprocal, although not necessarily equal.

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